



# *The Virginia Saltwater Review*

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<http://www.mrc.virginia.gov>*

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by

**Department of Plans and Statistics, Fisheries Management Division**

## **OVERVIEW**

As we noted last week, the summer fishery is upon us, and productivity is definitely increasing. Cobia continue to make the news, with reports of good hook-ups in the Chesapeake Bay for some, while others are still watching their chum slick, but more fish to our south are reported to be moving in. Offshore action is great right now, and the Virginia Charter Boat Association notes that many boats are just sitting at the dock awaiting customers that want to take advantage of the current fishing bonanza. Croaker, spot, and flounder continue to make the news. And, check out page 7 to see the newest state record from the very popular deep drop fishery offshore of Virginia, where a 56-pound, 8-ounce golden tilefish was landed June 10, 2008.

## **THE FISHING REPORT**

### **Chincoteague**

There is plenty of fish to be had near Captain Bob's. This week, Donna reported scattered croaker and a few weakfish, but kingfish have been the most enjoyable to anglers. Most of the larger ones (12-14 inches) were caught outside the inlet around marker 8, and some have been large enough to fillet. Flounder are being caught everywhere, but the throwback ratio has increased (probably due to warm waters). Anglers continue to catch several keepers for each day of fishing (most have been in the 22- to 24-inch range). An 8.5-pound, 27.5-inch flounder was weighed in by angler Richie Peck. The wrecks continue to produce a variety of species, including sheepshead. Offshore action is hot right now with numerous bluefin tuna in the 80- to 90-pound range and a few over 160 pounds. The weather has been good, and the fishing has been great!

Flounder are still around, and staff at Steve's Bait and Tackle reported several citations this week. The deeper Chincoteague channel has been productive. On the inshore wrecks, spadefish are still biting well. Numerous kingfish continue to hit off the surf and in the inlet near Buoys 5 and 6. A few trout have been caught on slack tide—using peelers and jigheads tipped with gulf for bait have been the key to catching them. The crabbing has been good with a lot of jimmies being caught. Offshore fishing has picked up near Lumpy Bottom where nice bluefin tuna have been picked up in the 80-pound range.

## **Wachapreague**

Staff at Wachapreague Marina reports great fishing in the area. Offshore, numerous bluefin tuna up to 175 pounds were caught, as well as a few yellowfin tuna and dolphin. The flounder bite was good this week—the great weather helped that out. Flounder are doing well across from Cedar Island, in the deeper areas near the Coast Guard Station.

Flounder fishing is doing really well, according to staff at Captain Zeds. The wrecks are producing nice catches of black sea bass. Offshore, blueline tilefish were brought in and catches of dolphin, bluefin and yellowfin tuna were reported. Most of the action is located near 20 fathoms. A few citation red drum were hooked in the surf on Parramore Island.

## **Cape Charles**

Numerous citations were reported from Chris' Bait and Tackle this week, including a 90-pound, 8-ounce cobia caught at buoy 13 and an 80-pound, 14-ounce cobia caught near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Overall, the cobia report has been scattered. Two citation flounder (8 pounds and 8.5 pounds) were caught by Buoy 42A, others have been reported near the Cell and Buoy 36A at Cape Charles. Red drum are reported near Latimer Shoals. Off the pier at Kiptopeke, spot, croaker, and sea mullet were reported, and croaker have been caught near Morley's Wharf in the Occohannock Creek.

## **Lower Bay/Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel**

No citations were reported this week at Cobb's Marina. Anglers continue to catch spadefish and flounder, and few tilefish were reported around the 3<sup>rd</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel.

Sunset Boating Center reports decent skate and shark fishing at the Hampton Bar. Croaker and small cobia are also being hooked at the same area. Many anglers are having luck catching flounder, and spadefish are still biting at the Chesapeake Light Tower.

Staff at Salt Ponds Marina reported several citations this week. On the 20<sup>th</sup>, a 78-inch white marlin was released by the Cigar, and on the 22<sup>nd</sup>, a 70-pound cobia was caught at Bluefish Rock using eel. Several citation red drum have been hooked at Cape Henry and Fisherman's Island. Throughout the area, fishing has picked up. Staff reports catches of shark, spadefish, flounder, and cobia.

At the York River Fishing Center, a 63-pound citation cobia came in from Bluefish Rock. The flounder bite has picked up this week as well. Most anglers are catching keepers, and many are catching their limits from the mouth of the York River to the Coleman Bridge. The cobia bite is doing well at the York Spit, and spadefish are being hooked there as well. At times, there is an abundance of fish at the pier, if you can get your timing right. At any one time, there is a mixed bag of spot, croaker, flounder, and bluefish.

Ken Neill, reporting secretary for the Peninsula Anglers Club, contributed the following:

The flounder bite has turned on! Large flounder are coming from the Cell/Buoy 42 area, the structure of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and from Back River Reef. Croaker are everywhere, but the Cell/Buoy 42 area would be a good place to visit if you are looking for a hefty croaker.

Spadefish are biting at the Chesapeake Light Tower, the Cell, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and at Wolftrap Light. Citation-sized fish continue to be caught. The bite has not been red hot and small spadefish are around making it harder to catch the larger fish, but they are there if you work at them. Some large speckled trout are being caught in the North and Piankatank Rivers. Cobia are being chummed up at the normal cobia spots like York Spit and Bluefish Rock. The Inner Middle Grounds is an area where you have a shot at cobia, red drum and black drum. Anglers targeting black drum are looking for them around the islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. Spanish mackerel are being caught in impressive numbers. The hot spot has been Cape Henry; however, they are available throughout the lower bay and along the oceanfront. Amberjack are available for some pullage over the ocean wrecks and around the South Towers. Offshore action has consisted mainly of a nice dolphin bite and a pretty good bite of white and blue marlin. Yellowfin tuna have been scarce. The Cigar/Triple Os area has been where most of the action has been. On the Fingers/Wayne's World, there have been some nice bluefin tuna caught in the 50-200 pound range. Dolphin, king mackerel and mako sharks are also being caught in that area.

Dr. Julie Ball, IGFA International Representative for Virginia Beach, contributed the following:

Summer officially started last week, and most anglers are still looking for the big cobia run. Although the bite off Hampton has slowed, several big fish are coming from the Eastern Shore side of the bay this week.

With the clearer water lately, flounder action is picking up. Although anglers are still working hard for their limits, plenty of "barely shorts" are keeping them interested. According to the folks at Ocean's East 2, a surge in doormats are coming from the 1<sup>st</sup> Island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, where anglers are having good luck on strip bait and jigging. Joseph Harris of Norfolk landed a nice flatfish weighing 7 pounds, 5 ounces while working the 1<sup>st</sup> Island area this week. Good numbers of fish are also coming from the Cell, Buoy 42, Back River Reef, Oyster, as well as Lynnhaven and Rudee Inlets. Mike Kwiatkowski of Virginia Beach scored with a 9-pound, 11-ounce doormat on strip bait inside Rudee Inlet this week.

The Spanish mackerel bite along the Virginia Beach ocean front is impressive lately, and with the word getting out, the trolling crowd resembles the striped bass fleet seen in January. Boats are filling their limits with nice fish ranging from 16 to 24 inches. Small Clark and Drone spoons trolled at 5 to 6 knots is enticing the best response. The folks at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center are reporting sightings of king mackerel skying along the ocean front recently. It's only a matter of time until reports of catches start rolling in.

Spadefish are still skittish at the Chesapeake Light Tower and near shore wrecks. Folks are still fishing hard for their limits, with only a few citations in the mix. The best luck on spades is coming from those spear fishing while skin diving. With the spade bite hit and miss, more boats are targeting these mighty fighters at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel and the Cell, with similar success.

Sheepshead are still eluding most anglers along the Bridge Tunnel. Although tricky, if you put in your time you should find a few fish willing to cooperate. If you happen to catch a tautog while

fishing these same areas, you are in luck since the season reopened this week.

Black drum sightings with scattered hook-ups, are coming from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> islands of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel, with some fish pushing 60 pounds. These fish require extra time while reviving them in order to increase their survival rate. A few red drum are still taking baits along the Eastern Shore shoals, especially the Nine Foot Shoals, and schooling reds near the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel can provide good top water action.

Larger croaker pushing 2 to 2.5 pounds are lurking around the James River Bridge, the Hampton Roads Bridge Tunnel, The Monitor-Merrimac Bridge Tunnel, and off of Ocean View. Spot have also shown within Lynnhaven Inlet and Rudee Inlet.

Amberjack are enticing a few anglers to make the long run to the Southern Towers lately where many pups are willing to take your live bait, with a few big fish also testing a few backs.

Deep droppers are still going strong with good limits of tilefish, wreckfish, grouper, and rosefish, although the black sea bass action slowed this week.

Offshore Virginia is quite the mixed bag; anglers don't know which species they may hook into. Although yellowfin tuna are scarce, the bluefin tuna action is good, with most fish ranging in the 100-pound class or smaller, but a few fish pushing 200 pounds were boated recently. Most catches of bluefin tuna are coming from the Fingers area and the inshore lumps. Billfish are also available, with good numbers of gaffers coming from near the Cigar area. The WATERMAN skippered by Mike Standing out of the Fishing Center, had a decent week near the Fingers. Over four days, his crew landed bluefin tuna ranging from 40 to 90 pounds, gaffer dolphin to 25 pounds, a few kings to 15 pounds, and some scattered 25-pound class yellowfin tuna.

### **Virginia Middle Bay**

Smith Point Marina reports the flounder action has been very good, with a large number of keepers being caught around the jetties. Croaker in the 2-to 3-pound range and smaller spot are keeping the bottom fishermen happy. The catch of the week, so far, has been a four pound bluefish and anglers hope for more sightings of these.

Garrets Marina has seen very few anglers over the past week, but as good as the croaker bite was last week, Tommy figures they are still around. Flounder are due to show up soon, but until somebody starts fishing for them no one will know for sure.

According to Capt. Jim Thompson, the fishing was great some days and not so good on others. The croaker have been moving right up the cut channel. The Cell is starting to produce good numbers of flounder, many in the 26-inch range. The spadefish are here, but the numbers are very low, and the competition is fierce for a spot to anchor in order to catch them. Wolf Trap Light is the best if you desire to try for spades. In the Rappahannock, small spot are at the Spike and Butlers Hole. Off Gwynns Island and in the Piankatank River, small spot and small croaker are being taken. We caught our first sharks in the Bay and it was exciting to see them. Red drum were also caught off the range light, one was 52 inches and two other were lost in the

fight. All were caught on squid strips and chunks.

Jerry Thrash, of Queen's Creek Outfitters, contributed the following:

Croaker are biting well everywhere, and medium spot are mixed in. Flounder fishing at Buoy 42 and in the Cell area continues to improve. We weighed three citations this week. Spadefish continue to bite at the Cell and at Wolftrap Light, but there have been no feeding frenzies. The small fish have shown up a bit early so large fish are harder to catch with all the bait stealers mixed in. We weighed in five citations through Sunday, and all came from the Cell. Speckled Trout fishing slowed a bit this week. We registered two citation specks this week, one from the North River, the other from the Piankatank River.

### **Virginia Beach**

Paula Owen from Fisherman's Wharf Marina reports a fantastic week of fishing. Bluefin tuna is doing well above the 500 line, while spadefish are popular at the Chesapeake Light Tower and in the Bay. Spanish mackerel and bluefish are making a good showing. Cobia have been sighted at Sandbridge. Flounder are being caught at the 1<sup>st</sup> island of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel. In the offshore scenes, tilefish, grouper, and black sea bass are popular catches. As the sun goes down and night falls, red and black drum are making a showing at Nine Foot Shoals.

Staff at the Virginia Beach Fishing Center reports an increase in flounder activity with a 20% keeper rate. A 9-pound, 8-ounce citation was issued earlier this week. Inshore fishing is seeing good numbers of spadefish, and along the beach Spanish mackerel and bluefish are popular catches. Near the 26 Mile Hill, a bluefin tuna weighing in at 126 pounds was caught, with king mackerel also making an appearance in the area. Blue marlin have made a showing with a size range of 400 to 500 pounds. Charter boats are seeing good fishing for marlin, yellow fin tuna, and dolphin in the southern area. Tilefish are the popular catch at the Norfolk Canyon.

### **Virginia Piers**

Cobia have been spotted in the Ocean View Pier area, though none have been caught. Croaker continue to make a showing, as well as Spanish mackerel. Flounder are still being caught, but most are being released.

Over the past week, spot, croaker, and roundhead fishing has been successful for anglers at the Lynnhaven Pier. Nice size flounder are being caught in the area as well. Night time fishing is proving to be good for the anglers who prefer less heat and sun.

At the Virginia Beach Pier, there is slow fishing during the day as anglers try to avoid the heat, but night fishing is producing nice catches of roundhead and croaker. Spot are slowly beginning to show in the area, along with bluefish and Spanish mackerel. Few flounder are still being caught with a decent number being kept.

## **Outer Banks, NC**

The offshore fishing has been improving in the Nags Head area as the marlin bite, both white and blue, had success over the last week. Anglers were also finding yellow and blackfin tuna, amberjack, wahoo, and king mackerel. Closer to shore, anglers have been targeting amberjack, in the 30- to 35-pound range, and the bottom fishermen found blueline tilefish and triggerfish. Some red drum, striped bass and black sea bass could be found on the on the artificial reefs, about four miles offshore. People fishing the shore and piers were having excellent runs of bluefish and Spanish mackerel in the mornings; however, the bite would turn off quickly once the sun was up. Spoons and gotcha plugs were the bait of choice. Inside the sounds, the red drum and speckled trout action centered on the Melvin Daniels Bridge. Flounder catches were improving around the shallows around the islands with over 50% being keepers.

At the Oregon Inlet, the offshore action has been hot with white marlin showing up in earnest. Good numbers of blue marlin are still being caught, as well as a few sailfish. Dolphin fishing continues its streak with fair numbers in the gaffer size class. Yellowfin tuna continue to be found as well. Bottom fishing is producing triggerfish and tilefish, depending on the water depth. Inshore fishermen have been catching speckled trout and flounder.

South of Oregon Inlet, the fishing has slowed down somewhat, probably due to the west winds, but ardent fishermen could still produce bluefish, pompano, and sea mullet from ramps 38 to 43. A few Spanish mackerel were hooked in the mornings, from ramp 43 to 55. A few cobia were landed from local piers, and speckled trout and bluefish round out the past weeks offerings in the sound.

Offshore fishing from Cape Hatteras was hampered by rain and wind at the start of the workweek, but limits of dolphin were caught over the weekend. The billfish bite was also going strong. Close to shore and inside the inlet, Spanish mackerel and bluefish were hitting anything that had a metallic flash to it.

If you have additional information or would like further details contact Joe Grist at (757) 247-2237.

Please credit the Virginia Marine Resources Commission's THE SALTWATER REVIEW as the source of the fishing information.

For Immediate Release  
June 23, 2008

## Golden Tilefish Record Broken

A 56-pound, 8-ounce golden tilefish, caught on June 10, 2008 by Aaron Sledd of Virginia Beach, has been certified as the new Virginia state record for the species by the Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament. The record-setting tilefish measured 44 inches (TL) and the roe-laden female sported a 33-1/4-inch girth.

Sledd was fishing off the Virginia Beach coast near the Norfolk Canyon with Captain Steve Wray aboard the charter vessel Ocean Pearl in approximately 600 feet of water when the record-setting fish was hooked. Three other members of the charter party hooked-up with large fish simultaneously. But hammerhead sharks cut the line on one rig and the hooks were straightened on the two other lines. Sledd's double hook bottom rig, which was tied with 400-pound mono and a pair of heavy 10/0 Owner hooks, was the only rig that held and it withstood a 30 minute wrestling match between angler and fish. The record golden tilefish was caught on a well traveled Penn Slammer Stand-up rod and a 6/0 High-speed Senator reel packed with 80-pound PowerPro braided line. Squid was used for bait.

Golden tilefish was added to the list of eligible species for state record consideration in November 2006 with an initial qualifying weight of 40 pounds. Jeffery Dail was the initial record holder, with a 44-pound golden tilefish caught on April 29, 2007. Dail's record was bested by Charles Maresh on September 22, 2007 with a 53-1/2-pound tilefish and was the current state record fish prior to the certification of Sledd's 56-1/2-pound tilefish. The International Game Fish Association All-Tackle record for golden tilefish (*Lopholatilus chamaelonticeps*) is 59 pounds, 3 ounces and was set in May 2007 off the Maryland coast.

For more information, contact Lewis S. Gillingham, Virginia Saltwater Fishing Tournament, 968 S. Oriole Drive, Virginia Beach, VA 23451, (757) 491-5160, [vsuft@mrc.virginia.net](mailto:vsuft@mrc.virginia.net).

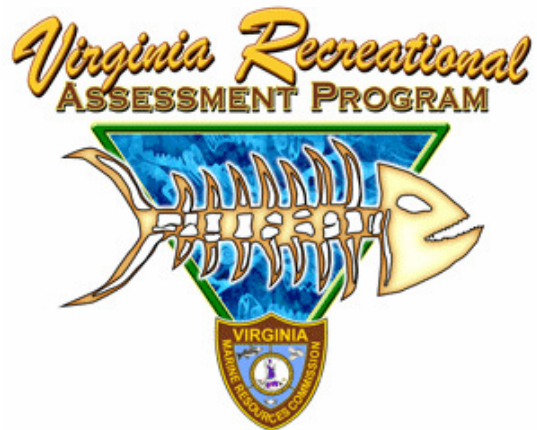


# Get Hooked!

## Report at

[www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com)

The Virginia Marine Resources Commission wants to know about the saltwater fish you caught and if you threw it back or took it home for dinner. How big was it? What species was it? Where did you catch it? This self-reported catch-and-release information will be posted on-line, giving the recreational angler a broader picture of what everyone else is catching -- and where.



The Fisherman's Journal is a tool intended to benefit the individual angler, the fishing community, and fishery managers. It allows individual anglers to keep an easy-to-retrieve record of their successful fishing experiences. It allows the fishing community to share and learn about other anglers' experiences. Finally, it benefits fishery managers by allowing them to assess fish populations by analyzing data provided by you, the recreational fisherman.

You will be able to report catch-and-release ranges, in addition to individual fish kept or released.

On those days that you catch-and-release 50 bluefish, you can just report the number caught and a range of lengths. Reporting individual measurements on more highly prized species -- such as Red Drum, Striped Bass and Flounder -- provides a greater benefit for everyone.

Anglers also may report their fishing trip information, including general location, time of day, weather and water conditions and type of gear and bait used. This information could be extremely valuable to other anglers to give them an idea of what is caught, where it is caught, and what bait is working on what species.

This self-reporting program will help anglers to become more successful and will provide fishery managers with important anecdotal information on recreational catches. The voluntary on-line reporting system is called the "Saltwater Fisherman's Journal," and is found at [www.vasaltwaterjournal.com](http://www.vasaltwaterjournal.com).

Virginia Marine Resources Commission  
Recreational Fishing Online Reporting



**Recreational Saltwater Fishing**  
Welcome Jgrist,

**Red Drum Reports are Needed!**

We are collecting length data from red drum that anglers catch-and-release. In 2009, there will be a coastwide (Virginia to Florida) stock assessment of the red drum population, and information is lacking on the catch-and-release of red drum outside of the management slot limit (18 to 26 inches).

**New 2008 Tautog Regs**

Closed Season	May 1 through June 24
Minimum Size Limit	14 inches
Possession Limit	4 per person

**June 16, 2008**  
Members: 1,457  
Trips: 295  
Catches: 3,941

[Related Links](#)














**THE VIRGINIA MARINE RESOURCES COMMISSION  
WANTS YOUR FISH....  
TO MEASURE AND AGE.**

*You catch it, you fillet it,*  
**but instead of throwing the remains in the trash,  
please donate them to science.**



The Marine Sportfish Collection Project will focus on species of fish that are difficult to collect through the agency's normal sampling program. Anglers are asked to donate their filleted carcasses (head and tail intact) of legal and fresh-caught:

<b>COBIA</b>		<b>RED DRUM</b>	
<b>SHEEPSHEAD</b>		<b>BLACK DRUM</b>	
<b>SPADEFISH</b>		<b>TAUTOG</b>	
<b>TILEFISH</b>		<b>GROUPE</b>	
<b>KING MACKEREL</b>		<b>SPANISH MACKEREL</b>	
<b>BLUEFISH (OVER 16 POUNDS OR 36 INCHES)</b>			

In return for participating in the project, the agency will provide a **ONE FREE PROJECT TEE SHIRT or HAT FOR EACH PARTICIPANT, PER MONTH.**

Please visit these bait and tackle merchants to participate:

**Bell Isle Marine (Hampton)**

**Chris' Bait and Tackle (Capeville)**

**Long Bay Pointe Marina (Virginia Beach)**

**Wachapreague Marina**

**Morningstar Marina – Gwynn's Island (formerly known as the Gwynn's Island Boatel)**

**Wallace's Bait and Tackle (Hampton)**

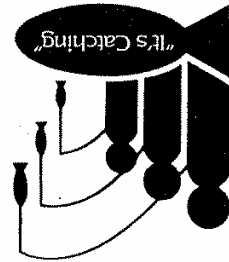
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*Practice*

## CAREFUL CATCH

**REDUCE STRESS FACTORS THAT KILL FISH**

**Exhaustion \* Loss of Slime \* Wounds \* Time out of Water**